

PORTSMOUTH COAST GUARD STATION STORAGE SHED (Boathouse) HABS No. NC-358-A  
Cape Lookout National Seashore  
Portsmouth Vicinity  
Carteret County  
North Carolina

HABS  
NC  
16-PORT V.  
1A-

## PHOTOGRAPHS

## WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Southeast Region  
Department of the Interior  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

HABS  
NC  
16-PORT V.  
1A-

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PORTSMOUTH COAST GUARD STATION STORAGE SHED (Boathouse) HABS No. NC-358-A

**Location:**

Cape Lookout National Seashore  
Portsmouth Village Historic District  
Carteret County  
North Carolina

U.S.G.S. Wainwright Quadrangle (7.5'),  
Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: 4,03,000E - 38,81,000N  
(Approximately 200 feet, 327 degrees  
from Portsmouth Life Saving Service-  
Station)

**Present Owner:**

National Park Service  
U. S. Department of the Interior  
P. O. Box 690  
Beaufort, North Carolina 28516

**Present Occupant:**

Dr. William Hand  
528 East Front Street  
New Bern, North Carolina 28560  
(Under Special Use Permit)

**Present Use:**

Storage Facility for Permittee

**Statement of Significance:**

As a minor storage facility, this small outbuilding contributed to the general historic scene of Portsmouth Village, an historic district entered on the National Register of Historic Places for its importance as the only existing village on Core Banks south of Ocracoke Inlet. The association of this structure with the U.S. Coast Guard as a boat storage shed for Portsmouth Coast Guard Station is also of some importance. The Storage Shed probably was built in the 1930's. The simple utilitarian architectural style of this modest building is not exceptional in any way and is classified as vernacular. Its significance is now severely compromised because of its extremely poor condition.

PART A. PHYSICAL CONTEXT AND RELATIONSHIP TO SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

The Portsmouth Coast Guard Station Storage Shed lies in Portsmouth Village Historic District. Portsmouth Village is located on the north end of Core Banks at Ocracoke Inlet. Core Banks is part of the North Carolina barrier island system known as the Outer Banks. The District encompasses approximately 250 acres and includes about 20 widely scattered buildings situated on low ground mostly surrounded and broken by saltwater marshes. Through its years of partial abandonment, the village has been heavily encroached by vegetation as the natural plant community has begun reclaiming its former range. This extremely vigorous plant community is characterized by wax myrtle, greenbrier, yaupon and similar bushy species. The National Park Service has been able to maintain some open areas to, as much as possible, provide firebreaks for preventing wildfire from spreading to structures and preserve the historic scene. Because of the meandering system of roads and yards and heavy intervening vegetation, the visitor experiences a compartmentalized view of the village. There are few locations where more than two or three sites can be seen from one point.

The shed lies in the northeastern quadrant of the historic district, approximately 200 feet northwest of Portsmouth Coast Guard Station and approximately 20 feet northeast of Portsmouth Coast Guard Station Stable. An active airstrip, frequently used by light aircraft, provides a grass-covered expanse between the shed and station. A road connecting the village with the eastern shore of north Core Banks passes within 100 feet of the shed. Other than for the station and stable, the shed is isolated from other extant structures in Portsmouth Village because it lies on the northeastern outskirts of the village. Detailed documentation of the shed location is available on the "Portsmouth Historic Zone Base Map" The map is preserved in the archives of Cape Lookout National Seashore.

PART B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND RELATIONSHIP TO SIGNIFICANCE OF  
PORTSMOUTH VILLAGE

Portsmouth Village was established in 1753 by an Act of the North Carolina General Assembly.<sup>1</sup> The village was important for its location on Ocracoke Inlet. This inlet was the major shipping route through the Outer Banks to other early important colonial North Carolina ports. The village served as the all-important transshipment point for large heavily laden ships that could not get past the shallow waters of Ocracoke Inlet until part of their cargoes were transferred to "lighters," small ships that could cross the shoals. The large ships were reloaded after they had crossed Ocracoke Bar. Portsmouth Village provided storage and support facilities for this lightering industry. This industry was very successful and by 1842, two-thirds of North Carolina's exports passed through Ocracoke Inlet. The village's population was highest in 1860, with 650 persons.

Economic changes and the Civil War caused residents to leave Portsmouth Village. Ocracoke Inlet had become shallower and nature opened a new, deeper inlet at Hatteras in the 1840's.<sup>2</sup> The shipping industry forsook Portsmouth Village and shifted north to take advantage of the more favorable route through Hatteras Inlet.<sup>3</sup> Many residents fled when the Northern Army arrived on the Outer Banks. Most never returned because of economic reasons. The village's population steadily declined; 320 in 1870, 222 in 1880, 104 in 1930, to 17 in 1956.<sup>4</sup> Although the village dates from the

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, A Survey History of Cape Lookout National Seashore: North Carolina. F. Ross Holland, Jr., Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, 30 January 1968, page 38.

<sup>2</sup>Department of the Interior, Survey History. page 47.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Portsmouth Village, Cape Lookout National Seashore (one-sheet pamphlet), Cape Lookout National Seashore, Beaufort, North Carolina, 1986.

PORTSMOUTH COAST GUARD STATION STORAGE SHED(Boathouse)  
HABS No. NC-358-A (Page 4)

Colonial period, extant structures represent a period from the last decades of the 19th Century to the first decades of the 20th Century.<sup>5</sup>

The shed was used as a boathouse for Portsmouth Coast Guard Station. When built in 1897, the station was known as Portsmouth Life Saving Service Station. The designation of the station changed to Portsmouth Coast Guard Station when the U. S. Life Saving Service and U. S. Revenue Cutter Service were combined to form the U. S. Coast Guard in 1915. The station was closed by 1940, probably less than ten years after the shed was built. Portsmouth Village had declined into an almost deserted town by the 1930's, when the shed arrived on the historic scene. In these later years of Portsmouth, as a major employer, the station was an important element in the village's social and economic fabric.

As stated earlier, the significance of this building is now severely compromised by its extremely deteriorated condition. The shed leans at such an extreme angle that it is in imminent danger of collapse. Because of its dangerous condition and is within view and a short distance from a major public access route, it is a hazard to curious visitors who occasionally inspect it. Repairing this building would require reconstruction, not just restoration.

#### PART C. SPECIFIC HISTORY OF THE SHED

The shed sheltered boats used by the Coast Guard Station crews to rescue shipwreck victims. Although the exact construction date of this building is not known, its architectural/construction, style indicates that it was built in the 1930's. Because of its modest size and use, records of its construction may not have been made. Use of this building by the Coast Guard ceased in 1938, when Portsmouth Coast Guard Station was closed.

The National Park Service has leased the building under a Special Use Permit, from 1975 to present, to a private individual, Dr. Hand of New Bern. Dr. Hand uses the shed to store recreational equipment such as all-terrain vehicles, fishing gear, etc. Little,

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<sup>5</sup>U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, Portsmouth Village, by Lenard E. Brown, Regional Historian, Southeast Regional Office, National Park Service, Atlanta, Georgia, June 1977, page 3 of "Statement of Significance."

PORTSMOUTH COAST GUARD STATION STORAGE SHED(Boathouse)  
HABS No. NC-358-A (Page 5)

if any, maintenance has been done to the shed. The permit probably will not be renewed after this year.

PART D. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF SHED

This 12' 6" wide by 26' 6" long wood structure is a simple board and batten building with gables and overhanging eaves. This, essentially one-room, shed does not appear to have been added to or greatly modified in any manner. A large (6' 8" wide) double door in one end provided access for the boat(s) that were stored in it during the Coast Guard period. A window is at the opposite end of the building. Floor joists are 3" x 10" timbers; studs are 2" x 4" and 4" x 4"; rafters are both 2" x 4" and 2" x 6". Detailed drawings are permanently filed in archives of Cape Lookout National Seashore. Photographs, detailed drawings and an "Architectural Data Form" (Form 10-920) were accepted in January 1989 by the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service for submission to the Library of Congress under the Historic American Buildings Survey process.

**PORTSMOUTH COAST GUARD STATION STORAGE SHED(Beathouse)**  
**HABS No. NC-358-A (Page 6)**

Form 10-920  
(June 1983)

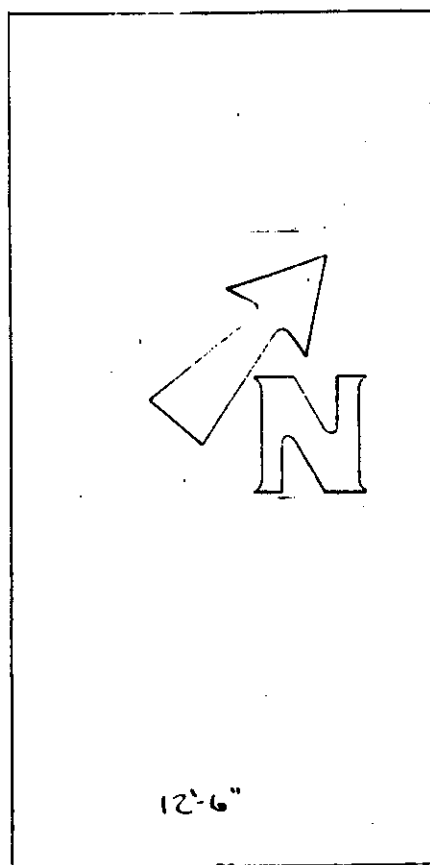
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM**

STATE	COUNTY	TOWN OR VICINITY
North Carolina	Carteret	Portsmouth Village Historic Dist
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME)		HABS NO.
Portsmouth Life Saving Station Storage Shed NPS # 501 D, LCS # 12534		
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES)		
See attached map for location in Portsmouth Village		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE)	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE)	
Architectural style suggest construction in the 1930's	No known original architect	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE)		
The structure served as a boat storage shed during the active years of the Life Saving Station. At present it has no significant architectural value. In the present condition the structure presents a hazard to the public.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE)		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS)		
Wood construction with 3"x10" timbers for floor joist on 24" centers, 2"x4" and 4"x4" studs randomly spaced at 3', 4', and 5' intervals, and rafters of 2"x4" and 2"x6" on 24" centers.		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE)		
See attached architectural drawing		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED)		
See drawing		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE		
Presently the structure is in an advanced state of deterioration and presents the immediate possibility of collapsing		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.)		
Oral history interviews, historic photos, written publications		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION	DATE	
Ron Parrish, National Park Ranger, CALO	1-4-89	

Photo Positions 1-10-89

3



Not Able to take pictures  
from N side due to  
vegetation.

50 degrees



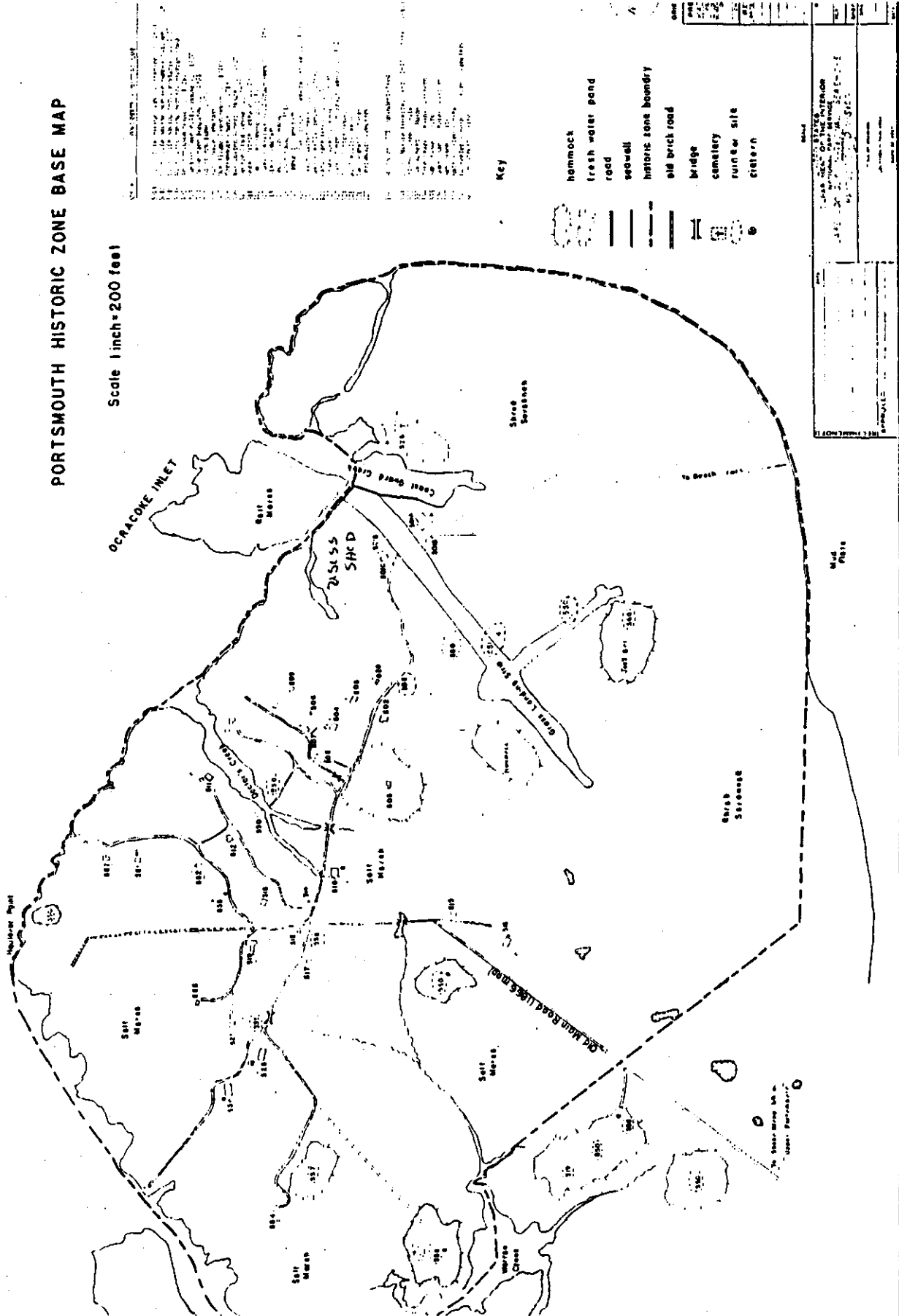
US LIFESAIVING STORAGE SHED  
NPS # 501-D

2

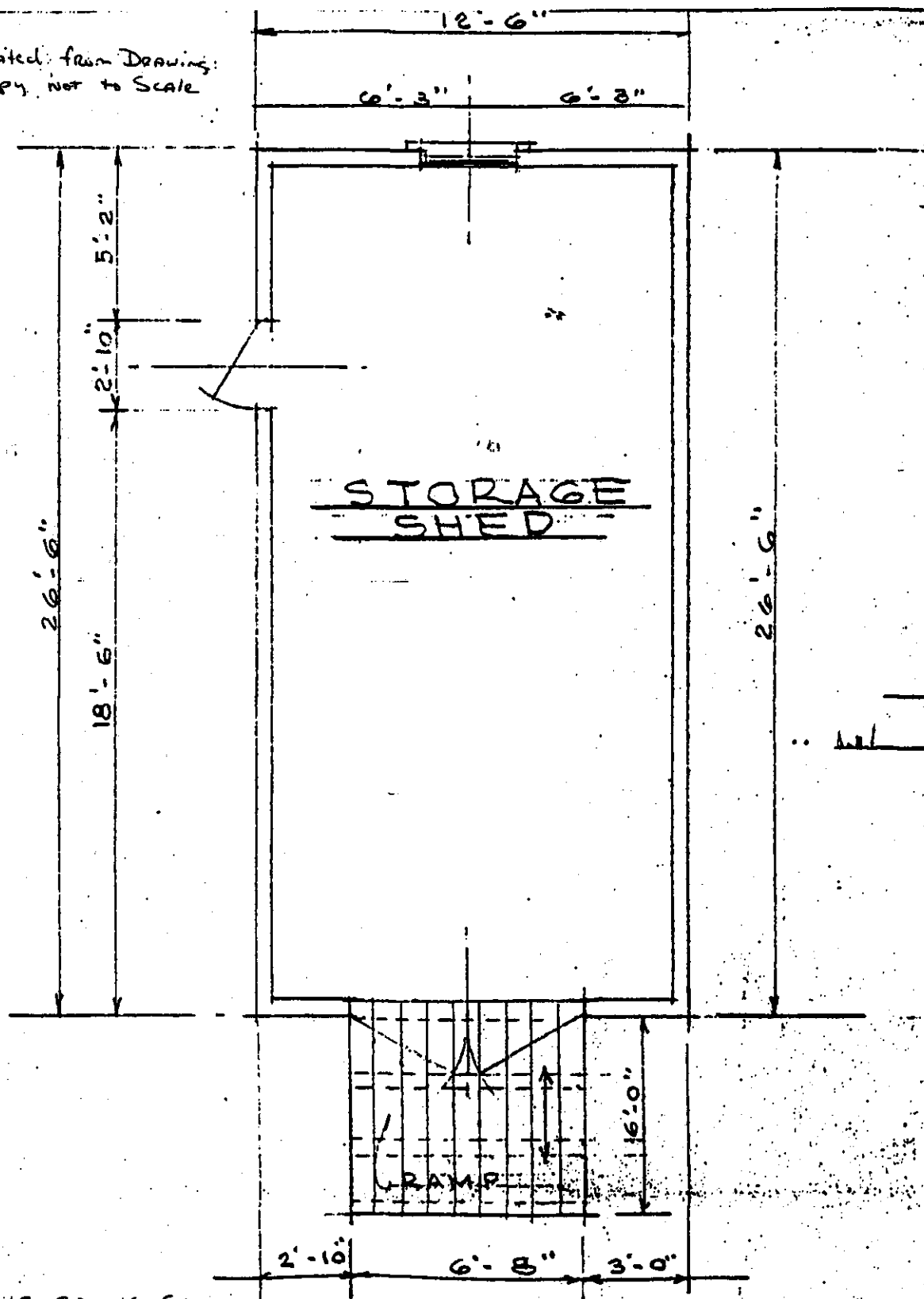


PORTSMOUTH HISTORIC ZONE BASE MAP

Scale 1 inch=200 feet



Duplicated from Drawing:  
this copy not to Scale

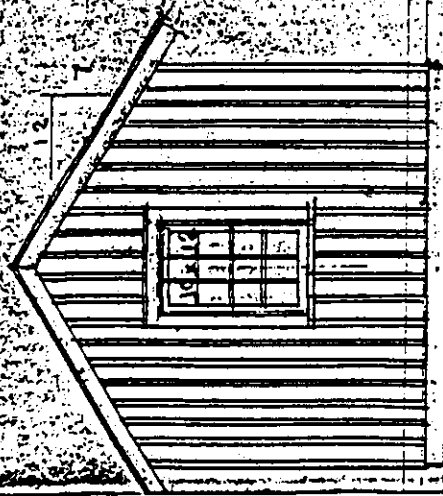


US LIFE SAVING STATION  
STORAGE SHED  
NPS-501-D

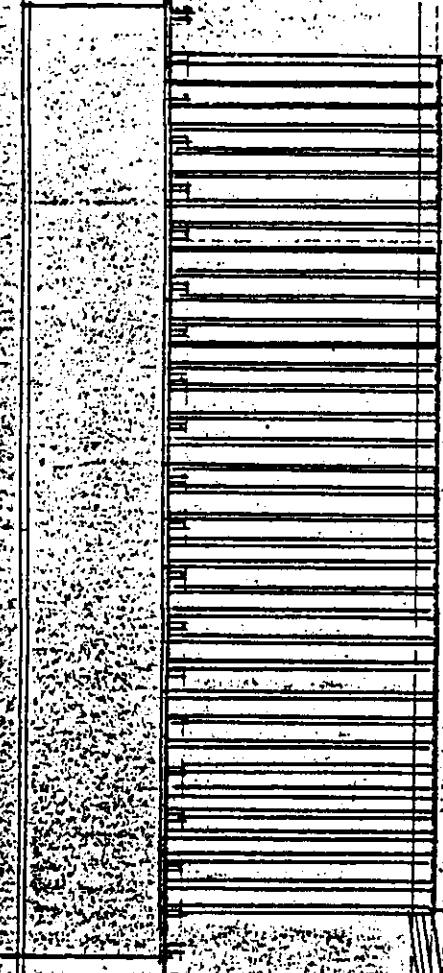
PLAN  
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

U.S. LIFE SAVING STATION SHED  
NPS 301-D

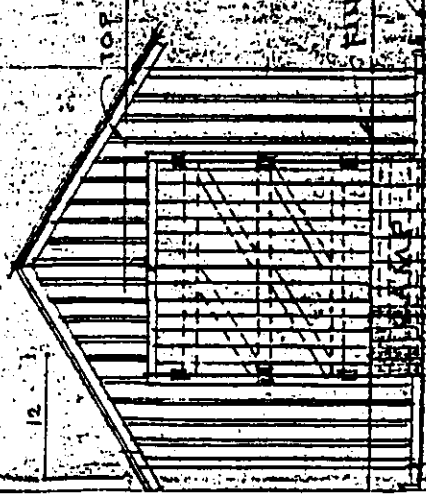
Designed for 25' span  
this shed is to be 25' x 12'



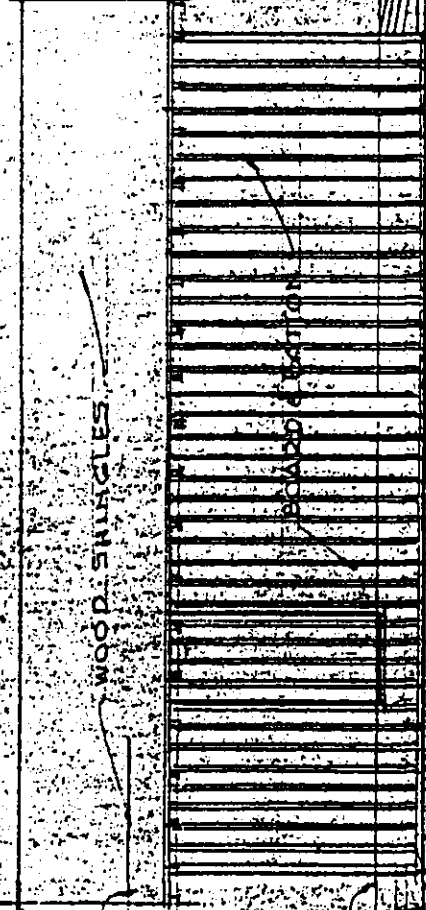
REAR ELEVATION  
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



RIGHT SIDE ELEVATION  
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



FRONT ELEVATION  
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



LEFT SIDE ELEVATION  
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

